

Professor G. Robert Blakey: "Enigma"?

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"Professor Blakey's remarks in January are not all believable. Some are just plain rubbish. Here are some examples. . . ."

Professor G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, gave a speech on the work of the committee to the Cornell University Law School alumni meeting on January 25, 1979./1/ A review of that speech leaves the knowledgeable JFK assassination research community as puzzled as ever about Professor Blakey. He is truly an enigma regarding his real motivations, beliefs, and intentions with respect to the assassination of President Kennedy.

Is Professor Blakey wittingly a tool of the PCG (Power Control Group), that pervasive collection of men who planned, executed, and covered up all of our political assassinations in the last fifteen years? Or is he a "brilliant" scientist, blinded by scientific analysis to the point of missing the obvious? Is he under the domination of the U.S. intelligence community? Is he a friend of the Mafia, as many have asserted? Or is he an isolated, independent thinker, so cautious and so fitted with blinders that he left critical areas of evidence unexplored?

His speech before the Cornell alumni provides few clues. His public statements during the hearings of the House Select Committee on Assassinations last autumn were representative of the enigma. He seemed to take both sides, theorizing about nearly all of the classes of conspiracies that researchers have presented since 1964.

At the same time, he seemed to believe in: (1) the single bullet theory; (2) Oswald firing shots from the sixth floor window; and (3) other theories that were long ago proven to be completely false by his own chosen method, scientific analysis.

How could such a man look at the photographic evidence of the sixth floor window and still advocate his trajectory expert's testimony that some of the shots came from that window? How could such a man give great credence and polite treatment to a government-biased medical panel, while at the same time he engineered an attack on the only truly knowledgeable and independent member of that panel, Dr. Cyril Wecht? How could he possibly go forward on the last day of the HSCA hearings with the testimony about the police tape recording and the analysis of the shots recorded on that tape, knowing full well that the photographic evidence had already proven that the initial assumptions were faulty?

This is the central enigma of Blakey. A scientist, noted for his "brilliant" detachment, proceeds (with

irrefutable scientific evidence to the contrary) to orchestrate testimony on the last public day of the HSCA's existence. And he attempts to show there was a motorcycle on Elm Street in a position where there was none. Why would he do that?

One answer is that he knew the acoustic evidence was scientific evidence that the committee members would believe, that gave proof of a shot from the front. He had by then decided it was absolutely essential to reach a possible conspiracy conclusion. No other single piece of evidence, simple enough and seemingly scientific enough, had developed to be used at the last minute.

If Blakey had done the proper homework a year before with good researchers working on the photographic evidence, he would have had his conspiracy nailed down. His main problem with over 500 photographs available was that they proved a different kind of conspiracy than the one Blakey had decided to "sell" to the Committee. The photos proved that no one fired any shots at all from the sixth floor window. They proved that Oswald was a patsy. They proved that there existed a conspiracy of a sophisticated nature. They proved a strong hypothesis of well trained, well equipped people being involved with planning far in advance. The photographs would inevitably lead to intelligence involvement, either CIA or FBI or both. Blakey knew that this avenue was dangerous, whether or not he was a tool of the Power Control Group or not. The committee members were already frightened by too many dead bodies, left literally on their doorstep. Blakey's New Orleans, Mexico City, Florida, and Dallas field investigators had produced some really frightening results. So Blakey opted for a compromise as a way out: (1) a conspiracy involving Oswald and one or two other "lone nuts"; (2) a conspiracy that eventually will be proven to be impossible if a truly honest investigation is ever conducted. Such an investigation would focus on the pictures of the sixth floor window both inside and outside the building during and after the shots.

How do we know that Blakey cheated the committee and the public on the acoustic evidence? I became directly involved with him and his investigative staff during that last fateful week. Earlier it had been pointed out to the staff and to the acoustic experts, Dr. James Barger of Bolt, Beranek and Newman and Professors Mark Weiss and Ernest Aschkenasy of Queens College in New York, that their conclusions about the police motorcycle carrying the open

microphone that picked up the sounds of the shots, were provably wrong. Burger, Weiss and Aschkenasy had placed the particular motorcycle 120 to 140 feet behind the presidential limousine, trailing it down Elm Street at the time of the shots. Their analysis was based on matching the sounds on the tape with test shots fired from ONLY TWO locations, the grassy knoll and the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository Building. No other firing locations were ever used.

The motorcycle location was determined after finding matches of about 2/3 of the test shots with the tape sounds. Dr. Barger stated to me that if no motorcycle was found in the photographs, the original assumptions about the source of the shots being the TSBD window would have to be re-examined. The analysis was not faulty: the original assumptions must be. It is the old computer story of Garbage In, Garbage Out. A perfect analytical technique will almost always produce wrong results, given wrong initial data.

Three films show the area 120-140 feet behind the limousine at the time of the shots, the David Weigman, Malcolm Couch, and Elsie Dorman films. No motorcycle is present in this area in any of those films. In fact, the motorcycle closest to the area in question at shot times is over 200 feet behind the limousine. It is the one driven by officer McCain, the officer put on the grill before the HSCA in an attempt to establish his microphone as being the one picking up the sounds of the shots.

The photos and films of the limousine show four motorcycles immediately behind the president. The open microphone was undoubtedly on one of them. If Robert Blakey had been objective, he would have conducted a test in Dealey Plaza firing from several other locations such as the Dal Tex building and the other end of the TSBD. If he had, the matches between test shots and tape sounds would no doubt have gone up to 100% and the motorcycle location would have been correctly established.

At any rate, the Blakey staff acquired the Couch and Weigman films a second time from me, during that last week of the committee's life, with the explicit comment that there was no motorcycle in the required spot. They examined the films and decided to go ahead anyway on the last day with the Weiss, Aschkenasy, and Barger testimony. To this day, they have never mentioned the fact that the motorcycle is not where they said it was. If they did, they would have to admit that Oswald might have been a patsy and that the single bullet theory, the trajectory analysis, and the rest of their house of cards might collapse.

Professor Blakey's remarks in January are not all believable. Some are just plain rubbish. Here are some examples.

He says the committee staff ranged wide and deep in the files of the FBI and the CIA. It is a well known fact that prior to Blakey's arrival, Richard A. Sprague, Bob Tanenbaum, Ken Klein and Cliff Fenton, the JFK investigative team, received almost total opposition and stonewalling from those two agencies. The media and the National Archives also were stonewalling. The reason was very obvious to students of the assassination and of the Power Control Group. Richard A. Sprague had made it clear

that he would go into every aspect of the potential involvement of the CIA and the FBI in both assassinations and the coverups. He considered them as suspects, not as allies.

Blakey's statements in mid-1977, on the other hand, made it obvious that he would not be pressing them very hard. Access to files is one thing; investigating the agencies' complicity is something else again. If indeed the CIA and the FBI were co-operative, this would only serve to raise questions about Blakey himself. If Blakey were honest about it, we should read all about the meetings in Guy Gabaldin's apartment, the involvement of all those CIA agents, contractors and informers in the planning meetings in New Orleans, Mexico City and Dallas, the identity of the CIA sharpshooters in Dealey Plaza, the facts uncovered during the Garrison investigation, the knowledge kept by Richard Helms and E. Howard Hunt, Oswald's role as a double agent for the CIA and FBI, and all the rest of the facts most of the researchers have established for over ten years.

If Blakey is a PCG man, we will never hear about the results of the Cliff Fenton investigative team's efforts in New Orleans, Dallas, Mexico and Florida, or hear about Gaeton Fonzi's important discoveries in the Caribbean and Florida.

Blakey says they found out from the Zapruder film that the first shot was fired from the Depository Building and that it missed. There are two things wrong with this statement. First, the Zapruder film does not show the actions ascribed to it by Blakey, the photographic panel, and the committee, on the part of Governor Connally, President Kennedy, Jackie, and Mrs. Connally. Their contention is that all occupants of the car were turning and reacting to a shot from the rear, fired 7.9 seconds prior to Zapruder frame 313. That would be Z frame 169. This is not true. Any physical movement in reaction to that would not show up for at least 2 seconds, allowing at least 1/2 second for sound travel. That would be Zapruder frame 206. By then Kennedy has been hit, and the limousine bearing him is partially disappearing behind the Stemmons Freeway sign. The other occupants are also behind the sign. No one turned prior to disappearing behind the sign. The film does not show what Blakey says it does.

A second main point about Blakey's statement is that there is no way the Zapruder film could possibly indicate the source of a shot that missed. Even if the occupants did turn to the rear, which they didn't, it would not prove where to the rear the shot came from.

If Blakey had done his homework, or if he were honest about the homework his staff and Sprague's staff had done as early as November 1976, he would have had to admit that solid photographic evidence exists to show that the shot that missed was fired from the Dal Tex building. He would also have had to admit that the acoustic evidence is very important, because we know when the shot that missed was fired.

Blakey says the committee scientifically proved the single bullet theory. That is just plain bunk. Any knowledgeable researcher attending the hearings saw quite clearly how the medical panel, photographic panel and trajectory panel were carefully segre-

gated from each other, in such a manner as to come up with single bullet conclusions. The trajectory expert did not use the medical panel's locations for JFK's wounds. He invented his own. He also ignored the photographs themselves and the photographic panel's placements of JFK and Connally in the limousine. He invented his own placements, moving both men laterally and vertically just the right amount to satisfy the single bullet theory. Perhaps this was convincing to the public and to amateurs. But it certainly could not have deceived an "expert" like Blakey. He has to know the testimony was completely dishonest.

Blakey says the bullet fired from the knoll did not hit the President, and that the medical evidence was unequivocal that no shot came from the front. He completely ignores Cyril Wecht's testimony on this. Wecht has always maintained that there is a possibility the medical evidence indicates a shot from the right side or right front. He stated this in the hearings. Wecht says the brain would reveal this. Unfortunately, the brain is missing from the Archives.

Blakey also does not mention the back-and-to-the-left motion of the President's head following the fatal shot. No one in the hearings tried to explain away that phenomenon.

There is one absolutely correct statement in Blakey's speech before the Cornell law school alumni. It is the following: "The next time this happens — and it will happen: one in four of our presidents has been shot at ..."

References

/1/ "Clandestine America" for March-April-May-June, 1979, Assassination Information Bureau, Washington, DC, p. 13 ff.

A Preliminary Report on Three Mile Island

Based on a report by Eliot Marshall, in
"Science," April 20, 1979

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*"The NRC learns of negligence, mechanical failure, and
48 hours of confusion in the control room."*

The accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant was dangerously out of control for at least 48 hours, according to a preliminary staff report given to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on 4 April. That is how long it took the technicians to figure out with any certainty what had gone amiss. During the first 13-1/2 hours after the accident began, the reactor core overheated and then began to disintegrate. Technicians stopped this process by a fortuitous action whose significance they did not fully grasp until much later.

A mistaken move during this early period — such as a prolonged attempt to depressurize the reactor vessel, which is actually what the plant operators

had in mind on the first day — would have caused serious damage to the control machinery and possibly produced a disaster in Pennsylvania. While this explosive and extremely hazardous situation developed, the people of Harrisburg were given bland assurances that the reactor was under control and that they had nothing to fear. It was not until the third day of the accident, after the full extent of the danger became known, that Governor Richard Thornburgh announced that it might be a good idea for women and children to leave the immediate area, if they were so inclined. Many were.

The NRC staff report of 4 April reveals that good luck had as much to do with averting a catastrophe as good engineering. For 13-1/2 hours, it appears, the reactor core was left partially exposed above the cooling water, while temperatures inside the reactor vessel climbed off the recording chart. Engineers in the control room realized that something inventive had to be done. As one NRC staffer said, "There was some speculation ... that there were voids or perhaps bubbles in the system." Fortunately for Harrisburg, in trying to collapse those imagined voids, the technicians repressurized the system and raised the water level to cover the reactor core. Had this decision not been made when it was, gas would have continued to fill the reactor vessel, ultimately reaching the pumps and threatening the only viable cooling mechanism. As it was, the damage was extensive, although not enough to trigger an irreversible meltdown.

Chance appears to have played an important part in ending the crisis; negligence was important in causing it. According to the NRC report, a key element in the cooling system — three auxiliary feedwater pumps — had been taken out of commission 2 weeks before the accident and left out. This was done in violation of federal regulations. NRC's director of nuclear reactor regulation, Harold Denton, said on 4 April: "The auxiliary feedwater pumps should have been operational. Had they been, we would have had a completely different outcome." Negligence joined with mechanical failure and sheer folly (a technician confusedly turned off the emergency cooling system at the peak of the crisis) to eliminate all the planned safety systems intended to keep the reactor from overheating. When the core overheated, it produced a new and unexpected problem, a 1000-cubic-foot bubble of hydrogen gas, an eventuality for which the local utility and the federal regulators were utterly unprepared.

It took 2 days to analyze the situation and another 3 days to get it under control. ...

In its preliminary report to the commissioners, the NRC staff listed six major errors that contributed to the accident:

— The first was the failure to keep spare auxiliary feedwater pumps on-line as required by the NRC. Only one of four was operational on 28 March, leaving no margin of safety when the accident began at 4 a.m.

— Second, a relief valve in the primary coolant loop opened during the accident, as it should have, to let out overheated water. Then it failed to close. This caused a dangerous drop in pressure.

(please turn to page 8)